

of making sure that your brain could continue to focus on other things, that message to keep them and their spirits up. They devised a tap code. It was a 5-by-5 metric of A, B, C, D, E and the next line of F, G, H, I, J. They left out the K because that would not make it a 5-by-5-foot box.

His courage, his integrity, his leadership and loyalty to his fellow prisoners—his love of country—cemented faith wherever present. His valor in the face of the impossible ensured that he returned with honor.

Lieutenant Commander Robert Harper Shumaker—now Admiral Shumaker—holds a near and dear place in my heart. He happens to be my uncle. When my wife and I had our first daughter, we decided to name her Harper after one of the most incredible people we know.

Mr. Speaker, my daughter gave me very clear instructions before I came here, and that was to let everyone know how much we love this American hero. In my office, I keep two pictures: one of the day he was shot down, and the other of the day he was reunited with his family. They were reminders to me not of the darkness and cruelty of war but of the power of faith and the strength of a brotherhood and the honor that no one could take away.

On the 50th anniversary of one of the darkest hours endured by an American aviator, let the record show that we stand and applaud this most revered American patriot.

PRIME MINISTER NETANYAHU'S INVITATION TO SPEAK TO A JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, the scheduled March 3 invitation by Speaker BOEHNER to Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to speak to a joint session of Congress is wrong on many levels.

It is a deliberate attempt by the Israeli Prime Minister and the Speaker of the House to undercut an effort at a diplomatic solution to stop Iran from becoming a nuclear power. This is calculated to occur at a very sensitive stage in talks to reach a potential agreement to limit Iran's nuclear ambitions. Undercutting that diplomatic option is wrong for the United States. It undermines our efforts to smooth choppy waters at a time when we are deeply concerned with ISIS, Hezbollah, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria. The potential of being able to work with Iran beyond the nuclear weapons issue is important for trying to manage many of the world's most explosive problems.

It is impossible to fully comprehend the next steps if we undercut this diplomatic effort. Why give Iran an excuse to blame the United States for a failure of negotiations and play to their hardliners, who don't want any agreement

that would contain their efforts to build nuclear weapons?

There are no other good alternatives. Some of the people most eager to ultimately use military force against Iran are the same people who were so enthusiastic about going to war with Iraq. The fallout of the war with Iran would likely be as bad or worse at a time of upheaval in this troubled region.

There are other critical issues besides the negotiations with Iran. It is outrageous to think that Israel or any country would use Congress as a prop for their highly contested domestic elections. This proposed speech would be right in the middle of a short and heated Israeli election. It is unseemly and counterproductive. One has only to look at Netanyahu's television commercials from his last election—and how he used his appearance before Congress—to see where this is going.

Finally, there is the issue of respect for the Office of the President and the responsibility to conduct foreign policy. I can't imagine what the reaction would have been if Speaker NANCY PELOSI had offered French President Sarkozy an opportunity to lecture Republicans and George Bush about our disastrous policy in Iraq. Republicans would have been apoplectic.

This is not good for Israel either. It is creating a backlash at home for Netanyahu. It is creating heartburn for some of the strongest supporters of Israel in Congress, and it is straining the relationship between the administration and the Government of Israel. This drama is coming at a time when the majority of Israelis think their country is headed in the wrong direction, when Netanyahu does not have the majority support of his countrymen, when the election is quite close, with a significant number of undecided voters; and polls tell us a majority of Israelis think this speech is a bad idea.

It is unnecessary; it is unfortunate; and it is a bad precedent. Joint sessions involving heads of state and other world leaders should advance American interests and be a positive expression of our values and our opportunities, not a partisan or an ideological device. This proposed speech fails that test. The invitation should be withdrawn or rescheduled, or the Israeli Prime Minister, himself, should reconsider. I, for one, have no intention of being part of dignifying this blatant political act with my presence, because it is not good for Congress; it is not good for Israel; and it is not good for the United States.

REDEDICATING OURSELVES TO OUR NATION'S UNFINISHED WORK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. QUIGLEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, 7 score and 12 years ago, another gentleman from Illinois went to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, to dedicate the 4-month-old, still unfinished Union cemetery at

the site of one of the bloodiest battles in American history. There he would give one of our Nation's defining speeches. Amazingly, President Lincoln's address was not even the main event of that day. Edward Everett, the former president of Harvard, was the event's main speaker, spending 2 hours lecturing about ancient Greece and how that society honored their fallen soldiers.

Everett later wrote:

I should be glad if I could flatter myself that I came as near to the central idea of the occasion in 2 hours as President Lincoln did in 2 minutes.

In the 2½ minutes Lincoln spoke, he did more than honor our fallen soldiers. In 272 eloquent words, he reminded us that we live in a nation dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. He asked whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure.

In his address, the President also issued a challenge to his contemporaries and to generations of Americans thereafter, saying:

It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.

He concluded:

Our Nation shall have a new birth of freedom and that a government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from this Earth.

In his address, I believe, President Lincoln was asking the question: What do we as Americans mean when we say all of us "are created equal"?

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In the over 150 years since the Gettysburg Address, we have had our struggles, but we have also had our successes.

We have suffered the Supreme Court's decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, but we also experienced the redemption of *Brown v. Board of Education*. We allowed the women of this Nation to remain disenfranchised for more than a century, but we also passed the 19th Amendment, which affirmed women's right to vote.

We lived through the travesties of Jim Crow, but we also celebrated the passage of the Civil Rights Act. We watched Truman's executive action desegregate our military. We passed Don't Ask, Don't Tell—and repealed it—and DOMA, but we also have witnessed the legalization of same-sex marriage in 37 States and the District of Columbia.

All of these examples serve as reminders of the difficulties in ensuring equality for all, but they also demonstrate a nation that has responded to challenge and has been reborn. Each time, we have come a little closer to living up to the ideal that all of us are created equal.

To paraphrase Dr. King, the moral arc of our Nation may be long, but as history shows us, it bends towards justice, equality, and freedom.